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# Rep. Wants Free Troop Life Insurance

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Rep. Steve Israel (D-Huntington) announced yesterday that he has written legislation that would require the federal government to provide a minimum of \$100,000 life insurance free to active duty personnel.



"People fighting for our peace should have peace of mind," he said at a news conference at the American Legion hall in Bay Shore.

Israel has not yet submitted the bill to Congress but, he said, the idea for the Raheen Tyson Heighter Life Insurance for America's Troops Act came after Israel found out Cpl. Raheen Tyson Heighter, 22, of Bay Shore, the first soldier from Long Island killed in Iraq, had only a \$10,000 life insurance policy. That policy cost Heighter, who served in the Army's 2/230th Field Artillery unit, 60 cents a month.

A \$100,000 policy would have taken \$6 from his \$1,300 monthly paycheck; \$20 for a \$250,000 policy.

Heighter was killed July 24 when his convoy was attacked in northern Iraq.

Heighter's mother, Cathy, was surprised her son had only a \$10,000 policy, but said young men often see only dollar signs and the promise of college money when they enlist and don't think of things like life insurance because they're sure they will survive the wars they fight. "They think they're invincible," said the Bay Shore woman, standing next to Israel at the news conference.

Heighter said families of soldiers abroad must be supported. "It's not just my son, but hundreds and thousands of young men who are dying every day, some with young children, and you're telling me that lives are worth \$10,000," she said.

The Army provided an additional \$6,000 to cover funeral expenses for her son.

Israel said he will introduce and seek support for the bill this week during the opening session of the House. The bill should cost about \$134 million a year and would give soldiers \$100,000 of life insurance without having to pay a premium. For any coverage above that amount, soldiers would have to pay a monthly premium.

Soldiers should not have to deduct monthly life insurance premiums for basic life insurance from their already low pay, Israel said.

"It's too late for Raheen," he said, "We failed Raheen, but we shouldn't fail his comrades."

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